

Marijuana

Street Name / Slang Terms

Aunt Mary, Bobby, Boom, Chronic, Dope ganja, Gangster, Grass, Hash, Herb, Kif, Mary Jane, Pot, Reefer, Sinsemilla, Skunk, Weed

What is it ?

Marijuana is a product of the hemp plant, *Cannabis sativa*. The main active chemical in marijuana is THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol). Of the roughly 400 chemicals found in the cannabis plant, THC affects the brain the most. What does it look like ? Green or gray mixture of dried, shredded leaves of the hemp plant. How is used ? Usually smoked as a cigarette or joint, or in a pipe or bong, marijuana has appeared in blunts in recent years. These are cigars that have been emptied of tobacco and re-filled with marijuana, sometimes in combination with another drug, such as crack. Some users also mix marijuana into foods or use it to brew tea. Effects of Marijuana on the Brain Researchers have found that THC changes the way in which sensory information gets into and is acted on by the hippocampus. This is a component of the brain's limbic system that is crucial for learning, memory, and the integration of sensory experiences with emotions and motivations. Investigations have shown that THC suppresses neurons in the information processing system of the hippocampus. In addition, researchers have discovered that learned behaviors, which depend on the hippocampus, also deteriorate. Effects of Marijuana on the Lungs Someone who smokes marijuana regularly may have many of the same respiratory problems that tobacco smokers have. These individuals may have daily cough and phlegm, symptoms of chronic bronchitis, and more frequent chest colds. Continuing to smoke marijuana can lead to abnormal functioning of lung tissue injured or destroyed by marijuana smoke.

Regardless of the THC content, the amount of tar inhaled by marijuana smokers and the level of carbon monoxide absorbed are three to five times greater than among tobacco smokers. This may be due to marijuana users inhaling more deeply and holding the smoke in the lungs. Other Short Term Effects Dry mouth and/or throat, problems with memory and learning, distorted perception (sights, sounds, time, touch), trouble with thinking and problem solving, loss of motor coordination, increased heart rate, and anxiety. These effects are even greater when other drugs are mixed with marijuana. Persons high on marijuana show the same lack of coordination on standard drunk driver tests as do people who have had too much to drink. Long Term Effects Marijuana smoke contains some of the same cancer-causing compounds as tobacco, sometimes in higher concentrations. Someone who smokes 1 to 3 joints can produce the same lung damage and potential cancer risk as smoking five times as many cigarettes.